United Nations

Daily Highlights

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council extends mandate of expanded UNOMIG for six months; urges comprehensive political settlement, respecting Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity; says progress would allow reconsideration of possible peace-keeping force in Abkhazia.

+ Special Representative Akashi says demonstrations by displaced persons are preventing UNPROFOR from carrying out mission in Croatia; Sarajevo airport closed after five aircraft hit by ground fire.

+ Fears of epidemic rise as UNHCR confirms 111 cholera deaths at Rwandan refugee camp in Goma; suspected cases of bubonic plague and measles reported in other camps.

+ International Law Commission adopts draft proposal that would empower proposed international criminal court to judge crimes against peace and security of mankind.

+ Secretary-General congratulates United States on twenty-fifth anniversary of Apollo II moon landing.

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The Security Council today extended the mandate of an expanded United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) to 13 January 1995. In unanimously adopting resolution 937 (1994), it authorized an increase in the Mission's strength up to 136 military observers, with appropriate civilian staff. The Council mandated UNOMIG to: monitor and verify the implementation of the Agreement on a Cease-fire and Separation of Forces signed in Moscow on 14 May; observe the operation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) peace-keeping forces; verify that troops and heavy military equipment were no longer in the security or restricted-weapons zones; monitor the withdrawal of Georgian troops from the Kodori valley to beyond the boundaries of Abkhazia, Republic of Georgia; and investigate violations of the Agreement.

The Council called on the parties to intensify efforts to achieve a comprehensive political settlement under the auspices of the United Nations,

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with the assistance of the Russian Federation as facilitator and the participation of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). It welcomed the parties' wish that the United Nations continue to be actively involved in the pursuit of a political settlement. The Council stressed the importance of agreement on the political status of Abkhazia, respecting fully the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Georgia. Progress on a settlement would allow the Council to reconsider the possible establishment of a peace-keeping force in Abkhazia.

The Council stressed the need to prevent any resumption of hostilities. It expressed concern at the humanitarian situation, and the possible dangers if the large numbers of refugees and displaced persons could not return home safely. The Council asked the Secretary-General to establish an arrangement on the respective roles and responsibilities of UNOMIG and the CIS peace-keeping force. It also asked him to report within three months on the situation in Abkhazia and on the implementation of relevant agreements.

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Special Representative Yasushi Akashi said today that demonstrations by the Association of Displaced Persons had prevented the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) from carrying out its mission in Croatia. At a press conference in Zagreb, Mr. Akashi said the demonstrators had blocked all agreed crossing points into the United Nations Protected Areas (UNPAs). Their actions had tarnished Croatia's international image and delayed the return of displaced persons by raising tensions and damaging UNPROFOR's ablility to keep the peace.

Mr. Akashi noted that United Nations agencies had helped thousands of displaced persons to return to their homes in Croatia. He reminded the Croatian authorities that they had requested UNPROFOR's presence, and said that troop-contributing countries could not understand why their personnel were being denied supplies and harrassed.

Meanwhile, Sarajevo airport was closed today after shots were fired at relief flights approaching the city. Five aircraft were hit, and one United Nations staff member was wounded in the leg.

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Fears of a severe cholera epidemic among Rwandan refugees in Zaire increased today as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) confirmed 111 deaths from the disease in Goma. The 200,000 children under five years of age in the town are particularly vulnerable to cholera. Suspected cases of bubonic plague and measles were reported in other refugee camps.

The UNHCR humanitarian airlift into Goma is being restricted by capacity of the airport, which can handle no more than 16 flights during daylight

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hours. The agency is trying to reduce the turn-around time for planes from 3 hours to 30 minutes. Twenty WFP trucks are expected to arrive in Goma today -- the first overland convoy to reach the town.

Meanwhile, UNHCR reported that 2,000 people were leaving southwestern Rwanda for Zaire every hour, and at least 250,000 refugees were already in Bukavu. The World Food Programme (WFP) estimates there are now some 4 million Rwandan refugees, including 1.4 million in Zaire, 1.1 million in Burundi and 400,000 in Tanzania. Another 700,000 people were displaced within Rwanda.

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The International Law Commission, meeting in Geneva, has adopted a draft proposal that would empower an international criminal court to judge crimes against the peace and security of mankind. The proposed court would have jurisdiction over cases of aggression, crimes against humanity, and serious violations of international humanitarian law during armed conflicts. It would have extensive powers concerning genocide, as the 1948 Genocide Convention provides that persons can be tried in the territory where the crime was committed or by an international tribunal. The Security Council, which is responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, would be able to refer specific cases to the court under the United Nations Charter.

The International Law Commission is composed of 34 experts representing the world's main legal systems. It was established by the General Assembly in 1947 to help develop and codify international law. Its recommendations will be referred to the Assembly later this year.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has congratulated the United States on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Apollo II moon landing, calling the feat "one of mankind's great achievments". In a message to President Bill Clinton, he described the landing as a testament to humanity's determination to strive for knowledge and understanding of outer space.

The Secretary-General said the United States had played a central role in transforming outer space from an arena of competition into one of cooperation, which could be a model for peaceful relations among States. The United Nations would continue to play an important part in encouraging and coordinating such cooperation, and ensuring that the practical applications of space technology would benefit all mankind.

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